

## NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **STENEHJEM REMINDS CITIZENS TO BE CAREFUL WITH THEIR GENEROSITY**

BISMARCK – Across the nation, charities and nonprofit organizations are springing into action to help the victims of Hurricane Katrina. Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem cautions that such disasters provide a perfect opportunity for scam artists to exploit the generous nature of North Dakotans.

“We have all seen news stores of the devastation and destruction the hurricane left behind. The images are shocking, and people just want to know how they can help. Unfortunately, that makes it easy for scam artists,” said Stenehjem. “It is important to make sure your donations are going to a genuine relief organization, not lining the pockets of a scam artist.”

Although the Consumer Protection division has not received any complaints in North Dakota about scams related to Hurricane Katrina, nationwide there are already reports of scams using bogus websites with names similar to real disaster relief organizations.

“Before making a donation, check that both the organization and the Internet address are legitimate,” said Stenehjem. “Please give generously, but give wisely.”

The American Red Cross is accepting donations in person at local offices, by phone at 1-800-HELP-NOW or online at: [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org). Be sure to designate the donation for Hurricane Katrina relief.

Information about other legitimate charities and links to those websites is available from the following “watchdog” sites:

- The Better Business Bureau Wise Giving Alliance, at: [www.give.org](http://www.give.org).
- Network for Good, at: [http://www.networkforgood.org/topics/animal\\_environ/hurricanes/](http://www.networkforgood.org/topics/animal_environ/hurricanes/).
- Charity Navigator, at: <http://www.charitynavigator.org/>.

Here are some tips from the Attorney General’s Consumer Protection division to ensure your generosity helps the people who need it:

- Do not respond to e-mail solicitations for donations, or click on a link contained in such an e-mail.
- Be wary of telephone solicitations or solicitations made door-to-door.
- Never give out bank account and credit card numbers over the phone to someone who has contacted you.

- If making a contribution via the Internet, before entering your account information, make sure the website is secure and the URL is not hidden.
- Be wary of anyone who presses you for an immediate donation, or offers to send someone to pick up your donation.
- Ask where the money goes. Be suspicious if the charity refuses to answer questions about what percentage of your donation goes to the relief effort.
- Give money to organizations you know. Beware of an organization with a copycat name.

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